

Child and Family Services Update

May 12, 2004

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Director's Message

Safety First And Foremost - Both In Child Welfare And Domestic Violence Services

By Richard Anderson, Director of Child and Family Services

Safety is the most fundamental concept that we deal with as child welfare and domestic violence services professionals. Without safety, there can be no permanency or well-being. One definition of safety is the absence of danger. Another is the exemption from hurt, injury, or loss. While we can't keep anyone from the potential dangers of just being alive, we can keep people safe from known harm and the obvious threats of harm. Central to child welfare and domestic violence services is the concept of keeping children and adults safe. That's why our agency's first Practice Model Principle states that safety is "paramount."

The reason I am emphasizing safety in this Update is that there are times when we may see safety as the job of the CPS function in our agency, and not as much of an issue in ongoing services. Even in CPS we may miss key issues in emergency plans for safety. Safety is a critical obligation throughout all of our work. We need to know that each child in any placement is safe. In-home services need to consistently provide assessments of the safety of the child. Our domestic violence services must include safety in each phase of their work.

Part of our work in promoting safety involves the use of safety agreements and plans. Safety agreements, or in domestic violence safety plans, are not really safe if there is no guarantee that the events to be prevented will actually not happen. There needs to be assurance from someone or in some way that shows that the harm will not happen. The parent who says he or she will not leave the children home alone again and promises to provide supervision would not be considered a safety plan. Often we know very little of the adult making this promise. Having a neighbor, relative, or someone else who agrees to take the children when the parent is not able to be with them is more of a safety agreement. If this outside person signs such an agreement, then this strengthens the concept of a real safety agreement or safety plan.

We must ask children and adults if they feel safe. Engaging them in a discussion regarding what they worry about can often bring forth safety concerns. If you ask, "Are you having worries that you can tell me about?" and nothing about safety comes out, then you may want to ask something like, "and are you feeling safe right now?" Feeling safe is as important as being safe. If a child does not feel safe in a foster home, this will have devastating consequences for that young person. If an adult does not feel safe in a newfound apartment, away from the person who was abusing them, then they will not have a sense of permanence and there will be no well-being. We have to ask safety questions all the way through. Being in a foster home or having a living situation away from the person who inflicted harm is not the total solution.

The establishment of safety is foundational to our work. Only when safety is assured can we more fully address the risk factors and the protective capacities of the adult, on into the future. Risk is a part of the long-term view; safety is in the here and now. If a parent or adult can minimize risks and control for key identified risks, then safety can be achieved. Let's ask the questions that help each of us to know, for each child and adult that we serve, that they are safe and that they feel safe. And, if they are not safe, or do not feel safe, then we should know or be discovering the reasons why, and be addressing these reasons. This is vital to ongoing, and truly effective, functional assessments and service planning.

Thanks for being someone who cares enough to keep children and adults safe.

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Protection

Managing Domestic Violence Cases

By Dawn Hollingsworth, Domestic Violence Program Administrator, and Linda Wininger, Milestone Coordinator

If you are a typical caseworker for Child and Family Services, 30% of your caseload will be domestic violence related. Many of you have expressed a desire to learn more about how to manage domestic violence cases. The link below will take you to a guidebook that the New York State Department of Health and Human Services has written to provide their child welfare workers with guiding principles to assist them with the unique challenges that come with domestic violence cases. We believe that the information will help each of you in managing your domestic violence cases.

http://www.opdv.state.ny.us/coordination/model_policy/childwel.html

Development

Electronic High School

By Jerna Mitchell, New Employee Trainer Manager

Thanks, or no thanks, I'm not sure which, my son has been ill with mono and missed loads of school. This makes him short of credits as graduation approaches for him next year. But I have discovered that Utah has a great program called Electronic High School (EHS)

This may be a consideration for those youth on your caseloads who are shy a few credits for graduation, for families who just want to expand their horizons, or for those adults who would like to go back and complete high school.

EHS courses have been developed by master teachers and are correlated with the Utah State Core standards and objectives. Students are able to enroll any day of the year and work at their own pace until the course is completed, although students are expected to complete courses within 12 months.

EHS offers high school credit for:

Fine Arts

Art Foundations II
Art History and Criticism
Music Aesthetics
Photography

Science

Biology
Chemistry
Earth Systems
Human Biology
Physics
Principles of Technology

Computer Science

Computer Technology
Computer Programming I
Intro. to Information Technology

Language Arts

English (9, 10, 11)
English 12 - College Preparatory
Journalism

Mathematics

Pre-algebra
Elementary Algebra
Intermediate Algebra
Geometry
Pre-calculus
Calculus

Healthy Lifestyles

Health Education II
Fitness for Life

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Social Studies

Geography for Life
Geography II
Ancient World Civilizations
Modern World Civilizations
U.S. History II
Economics
Psychology
Sociology

Foreign Languages

English as a Second Language
French I and II
German I and II
Japanese I and II

Latin I, II and III

Navajo I and II

Spanish I

Spanish V

Electives

Adult Roles & Responsibilities
Advertising/Promotion
Business Communications
Child Development
Driver and Safety Education
Food and Nutrition
Food and Science
Horse Management
Medical Anatomy & Physiology
Sports and Entertainment Marketing
Teen Living

Courses in the EHS are free for Utah students.

To register for a course you go to <http://ehs.uen.org/> and register for an account. It takes about one week to get an account opened with an ID and everything you will need to begin. Then you return to <http://ehs.uen.org/> and register for courses.

It's that easy to register. Once a course is completed, a certificate indicating the student's grade and the credit earned is mailed to the student's school of residence.

To order a catalog, go to: <http://ehs.uen.org/EHScatalog.pdf>

Some People Are Horses

By Midge Delavan, Training Coordinator

People who go to meetings with me – trainers, mostly – have learned that if they use phrases like “beat a dead horse,” they will see me cringe and try to crawl under a table. This is because three of my best friends in the world are four-legged, thousand-pounders. Two of these amazing creatures, Lily and Raphael, live together in a little shed and yard far at the south end of the valley. They are young, just three and four, and full of life. I’m learning how to love them, discipline them, and ride with them. My third friend and I are close. We have aged together. Her arthritis protects her from being ridden by me, and she loves her life on her own little half acre.

My association with earth mother Star, silly and serious Raphael, and gentle, dominating, and nervous Lily, keeps me interested in all things equine. I go in and out of tack stores, spend time on the Internet, and read horse-oriented magazines. Doing this, I read stories about horses and their relationships with their humans. The parallels with child welfare are often present in these stories, for many horses have been misunderstood, neglected, and mistreated by those on whom they have depended. Lots of times the stories are about “rescuing” such mistreated horses.

Recently, I found a book called Riding Between the Worlds: Expanding Our Potential Through the Way of the Horse. The author, Linda Kohanov, is exploring what she began in her first book, The Tao of Equus: A Woman’s Journey of Healing and Transformation Through the Way of the Horse, the Ability of Horses to Address Human Emotional Issues. She describes the

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ways in which horses in her herd respond to her human clients in her work in Equine Assisted Psychotherapy. Besides responding to the sadness that clients bring by providing an uncritical shoulder (withers) to lean on, the horses also respond pointedly to the incongruence they sense in those who are suppressing deeply unresolved emotion.

The herd life of horses and their status as prey animals has led to a highly articulated social sense that they rely on to live comfortably in close proximity with others, depending on the herd to alert and protect. Amazingly, domesticated horses will adopt humans as their herd members and herd leaders. Beyond this, they will use the empathetic responses of which they are capable beyond our guessing, to bring humans in or keep them out.

Kohanov describes horse and human relationships that create a window into the emotion that is present after trauma. The highly sensitive, whether human or equine, may be both victim and counselor. Rocky is an abused horse who goes nuts when his owner is upset but is hiding her emotion. In some ways, that may say it all about children and adults who are also recovering from abuse and are subject to the emotion around them. Kicking and running may have become a habit, and they may be much more attuned to the ambient emotion of others than it would appear. For Rocky, the simple and honest expression of the emotion in consciousness is enough to calm him and re-establish the relationship.

Also in Kohanov's herd is Noche, a mustang who wanders over to offer encouragement and share joy. If we are among those who by fate, choice, or accident develop a relationship with a horse, we have a very present model of empathy. Some of us look to horses for the empathy that creates healing. Sometimes horses and humans have forgotten about empathy, and when it comes from any source has the surprising quality of acceptance.

Permanency

Through The Eyes Of A Boy

By Vickie Steffey, LCSW, Salt Lake Valley Region

I recently had a couple of articles published in Utah's Adoption Connection (January 2004). The following story is one of those articles. Steven Brown is not a real child.

My Story by Steven Brown

My name is Steven Brown and I am 10 years old. I see this lady once a week, she is my therapist, and she told me I have to write about my life and she would help me. So this is what I'm doing.

I have a brother named Kevin who is 4 years old. No, he is 8 years old, I just thought he was 4 because that is how old he was the last time I saw him. I don't know Kevin's last name. My dad left before I was born and I'm not sure what happened to Kevin's dad. I don't remember my dad or Kevin's dad. I do remember Emily's dad because his name is Steven too. I think Emily is 6 years old. I haven't seen her since she was about 2 years old. I wonder where Kevin and Emily are and how I will ever find them if I don't know their last names.

I haven't seen my mom for a long time. I can just barely remember what she looks like. I wish I had a picture of her but I don't. One thing I remember is that my mom would rent a video and we would sit on the couch and watch it. Sometime we would have popcorn and sometimes I would pretend that I was sleepy and lay my head on her arm. Sometimes she would put her arm around me and once, when she thought I was asleep, I think, she kissed the

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top of my head. My mom really had a tough life. My dad and Kevin's dad left her to take care of us and they didn't help her or anything. When Emily was born that other Steve, Emily's dad, moved in with us. He used to tell me that the reason my last name was brown was because I looked like poop. He didn't like me to touch Emily but sometimes I had to take care of her when my mom wasn't well.

When Steve moved in he and my mom used to like to party together. Sometimes they would laugh a lot and sometimes they would fight a lot. The fights were kind of scary and Emily and Kevin would cry and I would try to tell them to be quiet so Steve wouldn't get mad at them. Steve would tell me to shut those damn kids up but sometimes they wouldn't do it. Then he would get mad. Sometimes when Steve got mad he would leave for a couple days or I don't know how long. That was when my mom would get her purse and go into the bathroom and she would stay in there for a long time. I would listen at the door but I wouldn't hear the water running or anything and then I would start kicking the door and telling her to come out. Mostly she didn't say anything but sometimes she would yell at me to shut up.

One time when my mom was gone I took a bath and came out of the bathroom without any clothes on. Steve was there and he was drinking beer. He asked me what I was doing strutting my stuff all over the place. I told him I was just looking for some clothes to put on and he told me come here. I acted like I didn't hear him and then he yelled come here so I figured I better do it. That was when it started and I sure wished I hadn't been so stupid to come out of that bathroom without any clothes on. If I hadn't been so stupid it probably wouldn't have happened, but once it happened, he would do it every time my mom was gone. Sometimes I wouldn't come home if my mom wasn't there but then I'd worry that he would do it to Kevin.

One time when my mom had been in the bathroom for a real long time, I was kicking the door and hitting the door and all the sudden she opened it and hit me with something. My nose and lip started bleeding. She shut the door so I went to the kitchen to get a towel. She didn't come out all night long so the next morning I gave Emily her bottle and her betty and Kevin was still asleep so I went to school. The teacher asked me what happened to me and I didn't say anything. Later a woman came and told me I had to tell her what happened so I did and that was the worse thing I could have done but I didn't know it then. The next thing I know, I'm in the lady's car and they take me to this place where other kids were and Kevin and Emily were there too. Kevin was playing with toys and Emily was crying. I told them she needed her betty. They said who is that and I tried to tell them that betty is the name Emily calls her blanket but I don't think they understood. Emily likes to suck her thumb and hold betty. That is how she falls asleep. She really likes that stupid blanket she calls betty. But betty wasn't there so Emily kept crying.

After a few days or I don't really know how long, my mom came to see us. She was crying and said she had done some very bad things but she was going to get in a treatment program and then we would go home. I was glad to hear that. I said maybe we could get a movie and watch it like we used to. She said we would. She held Emily on her lap and rocked her and sang her songs. Kevin just played with toys. When mom left she told me to take care of Kevin and Emily because I was the oldest. I promised her that I would and I really tried. But it didn't seem like anyone was listening to me. Emily cried for betty and Kevin played with toys but sometimes he threw toys and he bit a kid and all hell broke loose. They tried to make him sit

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on a chair and he didn't like that at all. He even bit one of the ladies who was taking care of us.

Not long after the biting thing happened they said we were all going to go live in homes until our mom could get it together. I think that was the last time I saw Kevin and Emily but I'm not sure. It was a long time ago. I wonder about them a lot. I wonder if Emily ever got her betty and I wonder if Kevin is still biting people. I wonder what they look like and I wonder what their last names are. It sure seems like a brother should know what his sister and brother's last names are.

The home that they took me to was Martha's home. She smiled a lot when she saw me and she said I was her first foster child. I didn't say anything, but just to show you how stupid I was, I thought she thought my last name was foster. I said my name is Steven Brown and she smiled some more. Martha's husband sat in the chair and read the paper. He didn't say much and I got the feeling he wasn't happy to have me there. We had dinner and then I went to bed. I couldn't get to sleep because the sheets were too scratchy and the pillow was too big. I lay there for a long time and then I had to go to the bathroom but I was worried about going out in the hall and to the bathroom. I wondered if Martha's husband would be waiting for me outside the bathroom. Martha left a light on but I was still too scared to go. Finally I fell asleep but when I woke up the bed was wet. I got out of bed and pulled the sheet up so Martha wouldn't know what I had done. When I went downstairs Martha said I didn't smell good and she went upstairs. When she came down she asked me if I wet the bed and I said no. Then she told me how god doesn't like children who lie and I didn't say anything.

When I was at Martha's house I didn't say much or do much. Mostly I just sat around. She told me it's not normal for a 6-year-old boy to sit around so much and to go outside and play. I did play a little outside and then I would want to just sit down. A little girl that looked like Emily lived across the street. I would see her mom carry her to the car and I would pretend that Emily and me and Kevin lived in that house with our mom. I would take care of Emily and Kevin, and me and mom would sit on the couch and watch videos together. In my dream, my mom never went into the bathroom with her purse and that other Steve didn't know where we lived.

After a while I got a caseworker and I figured out what a foster kid was. She looked real sad when she told me and I could tell being a foster kid wasn't good. One day she told me that I was going to be adopted. She said she was going to look for a family for me that would be my forever family. I wasn't sure why I needed a forever family because I already had a family even though I hadn't seen them for a long time. I remembered that my mom told me we would be together again so I just figured I wouldn't worry about this forever family because my mom would probably show up pretty soon. Sometimes I had bad dreams about that other Steve; things he used to do to my mom and to me. I wondered if he had hurt my mom and that was why she hadn't come to get us or maybe he wouldn't let her come to get us. I wondered if she was mad at me because I told. I worried a lot about my mom but I didn't ask Martha or the caseworker about her. Martha said my mom wasn't a nice person and the caseworker said she would find a better mom for me. But I just wanted to see my mom.

When I was 8 years old the caseworker brought over my forever family. Their names were Allen and Sue. They took me to McDonald's and said I could get anything I wanted. They asked me lots of questions and smiled a lot. I didn't say much, just ate my hamburger. When

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they took me back to Martha's house they said I was awful quiet but they would come back next week and bring my new brother. At first I thought they meant Kevin and my heart started beating real fast. I asked if Kevin was coming and they said no, his name is Barry. So when Allen and Sue and Barry came I wasn't surprised that it wasn't Kevin. Barry was younger than me and Sue said he had always wanted an older brother so they had decided to get one for him. I started feeling mad and I decided right away I didn't like Barry. But I guess no one knew how I felt because pretty soon I went to live with Allen and Sue and Barry.

They had a coming home party for me and I met my new grandparents. Everyone looked real happy and Sue kept hugging me. I just wondered, does this mean I won't see my mom again? They put me in Barry's bedroom because we were going to be brothers. Right away I started doing things to Barry when Sue and Allen weren't looking. I would pinch him or hit him or hide his toys. He started crying a lot and I was glad. After a while Sue started looking at me funny and I would just act like I hadn't done anything. Then one time I bumped into Barry and made him spill his milk and Sue yelled at me and said what's the matter with you and you are a bad boy. That was when I started doing things to Barry at night when Sue and Allen were asleep. I told Barry if he told them what I did I would bite it off. Afterwards, I would lay in bed and wonder if I was like that other Steve that did those things to me and then I thought maybe that other Steve was my Dad and we were just a like. But mostly I felt glad because Barry was scared of me now and that made me feel strong. After a while Sue took Barry to talk to someone and Barry spilled the beans. I said I didn't do anything but they had already decided they weren't my forever family and I had to go. I wondered if I would get to go to my Mom's now but instead they found another foster family for me.

My new foster family told me about all the rules right after I walked in the door. They said they thought it was important for me to know what they expected of me. There were so many rules I didn't know how I would remember all of them but I didn't say anything. The next day they took me to school so I could get into their routine right away. The school was only a couple blocks away from their house so they said I could walk home after school. I worried all day long that I wouldn't be able to remember which house was theirs and I would walk in the wrong house. But I did find the right house and I was able to remember all the rules so it wasn't a bad place to live. They told me I had to start going to therapy so I could talk about my problems. I didn't say anything.

My therapist said hi and did I know why I was here. I said I was supposed to talk about my problems. She said maybe we'll just play a little bit first. She had lots of toys and some of them were baby toys but she said she wouldn't tell anyone which ones I played with. Pretty soon I was hiding the three little dolls all over the place and the mother doll was looking all over for them saying, "Where are my children?" Sometimes I would play with the clay and hit it with the hammer really hard. One day my therapist said she was sorry I hadn't gotten to tell my mom good-bye and that maybe I should write a story about my life. This would be my lifebook, all about me, where I've been and where I'm going. She said you have to say good-bye before you can say hello. So I guess I'm learning to say good-bye to mom and Kevin and Emily but it makes me really sad because I miss them. I asked my therapist if I would always feel sad and she said maybe but she would help me.

So this is my story. Good-bye. Steven Brown

Seven Core Issues:

- Loss – longing for mom and siblings, no opportunity to say good-bye.

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- Rejection – from Steve, from Mom (locking him out of the bathroom) and not coming to get him like she said she would.
- Guilt and Shame – walking out of the bathroom naked, telling about abuse, which led to removal.
- Grief – he can't move on, stuck, no resolution, worry about mom and siblings.
- Identity – worry that he is like the other Steve, doesn't know his birth father, no role models.
- Relationship – can't say hello until he has said good-bye, not ready to get close to anyone or become a member of a new family, attachment problems.
- Control – he liked it when Barry was afraid of him, made him feel strong and in control.

Cultural Responsiveness

Cultural Responsiveness With Polygamous Families

By Reba Nissen, Mentor Program Coordinator

Principle Voices of Polygamy will be presenting a workshop at our upcoming Child Welfare Institute on Tuesday, May 18, 2004. The organization's mission is to provide education to others about polygamous families and their culture, and to encourage empowerment of individuals and families from the polygamous culture to secure for themselves equal representation and civil rights.

Principle Voices of Polygamy offers the following services:

- Facilitate communication between polygamous families/communities and government agencies and non-government organizations.
- Coordinate advocacy training for individuals and communities from the polygamous culture, helping them to participate effectively in political, legal, and public discussions.
- Evaluate, compile, and disseminate useful information affecting plural families, especially legal issues and public policies.
- Provide formal and informal presentations, training, and education pertinent to the polygamous culture to government agencies and non-governmental organizations.
- Provide confidential, emergency assistance for individuals and families from the polygamous culture, and referrals to appropriate services where necessary.

The workshop, hosted by Principle Voices of Polygamy and featuring former director of FACT, Dr. Jayne Wolfe, is designed to help care providers understand the history and diversity of the polygamous culture and discover ways to interact with these families more effectively. Diversity found in this culture may be comparable to that of the Native American culture. Hear a polygamist child's view of the outside world. Presenters will offer strengths and needs in situations involving care providers and polygamous families. The presenters are Marianne Watson, Linda Kelsch, and Jayne L. Wolfe, Ph.D.

Marianne Watson is the Assistant Executive Director of Principle Voices of Polygamy. She has a BA in History. Currently, she works as a freelance family history researcher. She also researches and writes historical articles about Utah history and Mormon Fundamentalist history. Marianne was born and raised within a Mormon Fundamentalist community and is a sixth-generation descendant of polygamists; some of her progenitors lived in plural marriage as early as the 1840s. She is mother of nine, grandmother of three.

Dr. Jayne Wolfe served for 17 years as Executive Director of the Family Support Center in Salt Lake County, retiring from this position in the fall of 2003. In the course of her clinical practice, Dr. Wolfe has had significant opportunity to work with members of plural families, adults as well as children. In this context she has developed a level of understanding essential for "outsiders" offering assistance to members of these unique communities.

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Linda Kelsch is the Community Actions Director for Principle Voices of Polygamy. She comes from six generations of family who practiced plural marriage. Her father spent five years in the state penitentiary for unlawful cohabitation. She has relatives in all of the major polygamous groups. After teaching private school for 20 years, Linda retired to become a certified facilitator and mediator. After her experience at the state capitol lobbying against an anti-polygamy bill, she decided to advocate for the human rights of women and children of polygamy.

"For those charged with providing services to members of polygamous communities victimized by domestic violence, child abuse, or other crimes, it is critical to develop sensitivity to this unique culture. The same respect for cultural diversity we demonstrate when working with people whose race, religion, ethnicity, sexual preference or nationality are different from our own must be extended to those practicing plural marriage. Most people who follow "The Principle" of plural marriage do so out of deep religious conviction and family tradition. For many it is a highly satisfying and secure way of life. Whether by birth or marriage, however, a few live in families plagued by the same kinds of abuses found throughout the rest of society.

"In addition to the obvious differences from the majority culture in family size and structure, members of the various polygamous communities may use terms or phrases unfamiliar to "outsiders." Other differences may (or may not) include style of dress, length and type of education (home school private school or public school) and health care practices. Basic cultural sensitivity requires that service providers understand each client's values and beliefs in each of these areas before attempting to develop a treatment or service plan.

"Because of the secrecy in which most polygamous families have lived for over 100 years, those outside the culture have often substituted speculation and sensationalism for real knowledge and understanding."

--Jayne Wolfe, Ph.D.

For further reading:

Altman, I. & Ginat, J., ***Polygamous Families in Contemporary Society***, 1996, Cambridge University Press, New York

Batchelor, Mary, Watson, Marianne & Wilde, Anne, ***Voices in Harmony***, 2000, Salt Lake City, Utah

Bennion, Janet, ***Women of Principle***, 1998, Oxford Press, New York

Bradley, Martha Sonntag, ***Kidnapped from that Land***, 1993, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah

Solomon, Dorothy A., ***In My Father's House***, 1984, Franklin Watts N.Y.; Toronto

Partnership

Peer Consultation

By Reba Nissen, Mentor Program Coordinator

Recently, the Center for the Study of Social Policy in Washington, D.C. was asked by the Tennessee Department of Child and Family Services to provide some peer consultation to help them improve their practice regarding the assessment of children and families.

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Our Functional Assessment in Utah was mentioned as a model for other states, and the Center for the Study of Social Policy contacted us to set up some meetings in Tennessee so that we could come and share our story and resources with them.

It was decided that I should go, because of my work on developing our Functional Assessment model and tools, and that we should also provide Tennessee with someone who could speak from the experience of implementing the training and tools on the frontline. Robert W. Johnson, supervisor from St. George, Southwest Region, was chosen to represent the regions. (See the article about Robert W. Johnson in the Professional Competence section.)

After some pre-conferencing with the planners from Tennessee and the Center for the Study of Social Policy, Robert and I flew to Nashville and were transported to a state park about an hour south of the city.

Looking back on one and a half days of intensive sharing and discussion, I take the following things away with me:

- **Program development that follows our Practice Model leads to better outcomes.** Just as families who are told what to do and how to do it may not feel motivated to change their behaviors or work toward goals, and families who are listened to and encouraged to generate their solutions are more likely to reach for their goals and stay motivated, organizations working on change need to involve the whole organization. Tennessee involved program managers from their central office as well as managers, supervisors, and workers from the two regions who will be piloting their functional assessment. Every time I have been a part of a workgroup with representatives from each region, including frontline staff, I feel better about what we're producing, because we're doing it together. Many of the participants in the meetings in Tennessee expressed their appreciation for having a voice, and feeling safe about sharing their needs and challenges. Robert and I could have told the people in Tennessee how to create their functional assessment model and tools. Instead, we listened to their strengths and needs, shared our story, and encouraged them to generate their own solutions.
- **Sharing your story, both the challenges and the successes, is validating and motivating.** As Robert and I shared our experiences in developing and implementing the Functional Assessment in Utah, I was reminded of the opportunities we give families to share their stories and what the benefits may be for them. I felt listened to. Many participants expressed their thanks for our sharing. I was told that it gave the participants hope to know that we (Utah) had some similar experiences and challenges and that we had faced them and are stronger. I realized how far we've come and I felt renewed energy to continue working for better outcomes for children and families. I think families probably feel that way when they get to share their story with people who are listening for strengths and needs. I'm also starting to think about how helpful it may be for families to hear from other families who have shared experiences.
- **We are achieving a shared vision and a shared practice.** In early 2000, I was sitting in Richard Anderson's office talking with him about his Long-Term View for our Practice Model. He shared with me that he would like to be here to see the day when anyone who found themselves sitting at the table with any employee of Child and Family Services would be able to expect a certain quality of work. They would hear us asking similar questions, offering similar information, and providing creative and individualized interventions. Robert and I had never spent any time together prior to our flight to Nashville, and as we were sitting at the table with people from Tennessee and the Center for the Study of Social Policy, we were asking the same kinds of questions. (Sometimes, Robert would ask a question just as I was formulating the same question in my head!) We were both listening intently and reflecting what we had heard

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to clarify. We both offered support and encouragement and reminded the group about their strengths. We both tried to move the process away from “just tell us what we should be doing” to participants finding their own creative solutions. In early 2004, Robert and I have a shared vision and a shared practice because we both work for Utah’s Child and Family Services.

Organizational Competence

Our Amazing Administrative Team

By Dawn Hollingsworth, Domestic Violence Program Administrator

My new assignment as the Domestic Violence Program Administrator frightened me. Moving to the big city when you have been working in rural Utah is intimidating. I wasn’t sure what I would be able to add to the administrative team. My experiences within the division have related mostly to direct client services. While out in the region I would occasionally wonder, “Who’s flying this ship?” What I’ve found out about our pilots has been serendipitous.

A common theme keeps repeating itself in each administrative team meeting that I attend. Richard is always concerned about how the decisions we make will affect the frontline staff. Patti measures everything by how it will affect the families that we work with. Adam is concerned about keeping Child and Family Services on sound legal ground, and Jack’s brain is an amazing resource. His knowledge of finance and SAFE provides all of us with the tools we need to do our jobs. And thanks to Midge’s vision, Child and Family Services now has a long-term training plan. It’s through Midge’s efforts that each training offered by Child and Family Services has a written curriculum that can be used over and over again, allowing for consistency in information being trained statewide.

For example, during a recent meeting we discussed the blanket requirement for unannounced home visits. Richard had been busy doing field research by going out with and talking to caseworkers regarding this very requirement. One particular worker pointed out how she had spent the afternoon trying to make unannounced home visits and wasn’t able to find a single client home. Others mentioned that workers are scheduling several hours in the evenings in the hope that they will find their clients home. It was noted that making an unannounced home visit on a domestic violence case could increase risk. Richard asked the question, “What information can we gain from an unannounced home visit that we can’t gather in other less intrusive ways?” Negotiations with federal reviewers on requirements such as these are something the administrative team aggressively continues to pursue.

Every meeting I attend has these same dynamics. I no longer wonder how this ship is piloted. Richard is the first one there in the morning and the last one to leave in the evening. The administrative team’s work ethic has made me smile. It’s evident to me that this team has a clear view of the everyday workings of Child and Family Services. I hope I can keep up.

Professional Competence

Robert W. Johnson, Supervisor From Southwest Region

By Reba Nissen, Mentor Program Coordinator

I had the opportunity recently to travel to Tennessee to do some peer consultation with their state child welfare agency. (See the article in Partnerships about the Tennessee consultation.) I was fortunate to be joined by Robert Johnson, supervisor in the St. George office in Southwest Region. His Region Director, Todd Minchey and Division Director, Richard Anderson, chose Robert because of his role in the successful outcomes of the Qualitative Case Review in Southwest Region. Robert’s team had nine out of the region’s 24 total cases

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reviewed. Eight of the team's nine cases passed the review. I hope I can share with our readers some keys to Robert's successful supervision.

Robert started his career with the Department of Human Services in 1987 working for Youth Corrections. Robert helped start up the Cedar City Detention/Multi-Use Facility, which was focused primarily on long-term corrections. While working there, Robert attended the University of Nevada Las Vegas and received his Masters of Social Work. In 1993, Robert began working for Child and Family Services. He began with a caseload of 38 In-Home and Youth Services cases. Robert became a representative for Southwest Region in Youth Services. He served on the Youth Services Steering Committee and supervised the Iron County Youth Center until 2002, when Youth Services became part of Youth Corrections. At that time, Robert had the choice to move to Youth Corrections or stay with Child and Family Services. He chose to stay with Child and Family Services because of the Practice Model, the time we're given to intervene with children and families, form relationships with them, build services around them, and make a difference in their lives. Also, as a licensed therapist, Robert felt he had more opportunities to use his skills with Child and Family Services.

Robert became a supervisor in the St. George Office and feels fortunate to have the opportunity to supervise such a great team. Robert says his team has good personal relationships and all help to pull the team together.

Robert's three steps to Successful Supervision:

Step One: Engage and Team. Robert's first goal when he began working as a supervisor in St. George was to "Practice the Practice." He began by engaging with team members and building a team. Robert says the key to his supervision style is to be involved, show support, and know what's happening with every family his team is serving.

Step Two: Assess Strengths and Needs, Then Use Strengths and Meet Needs. He then assessed team member strengths and needs. He assigns cases based on strengths and helps develop staff with their individual needs in mind. Robert believes in mentoring and not giving cases for three months. He says the rest of his team believes in taking up the extra load, because they know it's going to be better for the team in the long run to have well trained and mentored co-workers. He says this builds and integrates the team. He has heard from his new workers that without mentoring many think they may not have stayed.

Step Three: Develop and Focus on a Shared Goal. Robert then saw that his next step was to define with his team a shared goal. They looked ahead to the upcoming QCR and began to say to themselves and each other, "We can do this (pass the QCR)." Robert feels it is important for workers to not feel alone, but rather to feel like "We're in this together, we will do this together."

Robert's advice for other supervisors is to "learn from your workers." Robert says they constantly amaze him. One of Robert's team members had to be out of the office for surgery and before leaving, the worker met with the mother of a family who was scheduled to have a Child and Family Team meeting during that time. The worker and mom created an agenda and some ground rules for the meeting. Robert attended the meeting as a support to the family and witnessed the mother running her own team meeting. Robert says this was the closest example he's seen to our model of an ideal Child and Family Team Meeting. He believes other families can share leadership in their teams, too.